



## A Rare Image of Historical Significance

All Civil War photographs can be arranged on a broad spectrum of historical significance. Where they fall is determined by criteria that include provenance, subject and content, as well as aesthetic qualities and condition. You might think of each photo as a data point loaded with unique bits of information to process and evaluate.

Over the years, *MI* has published thousands and thousands of images that reflect these diverse criteria, and this issue is no exception. Appreciate the natty Zouaves, distinctive Southerners and well-acquainted New York militiamen. Note the air of confidence exhibited by future Confederate brigadier Micah Jenkins as a Citadel cadet, the somber demeanor of a Prussian immigrant and the pleased look upon the face of a Pennsylvania captain. Observe the mystery chain dangling from the coat of an enlisted man and the drums in a grouping of field musicians.

One unusual image, brought to my attention by *Photo Sleuth* columnist Kurt Luther, occupies a place at the higher end of the spectrum. Upon first glance, the subject matter and aesthetics of this albumen photo of African-American soldiers demands attention. A further examination of the cardboard mount reveals period pencil inscriptions that identify each man. In a meticulously researched narrative that accompanies the albumen, collector Charles Joyce provides us with the military service and life story of each soldier and the likely scenario of how they came to be photographed together at L'Overture Hospital in Alexandria, Va. He also shares the unique provenance that traces back to a pacifist who volunteered with the U.S. Christian Commission.



Albumen photograph by an anonymous photographer. Charles Joyce Collection.

The L'Overture albumen is without a doubt one of the most historically significant Civil War images to surface in recent times.

In light of current events related to race, this photograph reminds us of the long and ongoing struggle for equality. Americans of all ethnicities can be inspired by this image of freedom fighters who battled for their rights during a perilous time in our republic. Images of this caliber will keep the story of our Civil War relevant for generations to come.

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